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MINING THE DEEP SEABED -- A WORKABLE PROPOSAL

ANNCR:

VOA NEWS ANALYST EDWARD CONLEY REVIEWS THE NEW UNITED STATES PROPOSALS FOR MINING THE RESOURCES OF THE DEEP SEABED:

VOICE:

ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS, STEADY PROGRESS IS BEING MADE IN THE EFFORT OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FIFTY NATIONS TO PRODUCE A COMPREHENSIVE, INTERNATIONALLY BINDING LAW OF THE SEA TREATY. THE ISSUES OF FISHING AND ECONOMIC ZONES, NAVIGATIONAL RIGHTS, OCEAN POLLUTION AND OTHERS ARE CLOSER TO RESOLUTION AT THE THIRD LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE. AND NOW, THE UNITED STATES HAS PROPOSED A PLAN TO RESOLVE PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND COMPLEX PROBLEM FACING THE DELEGATES -- THE QUESTION OF HOW TO EQUITABLY MINE THE RICH MINERAL RESOURCES OF THE DEEP SEABED BEYOND THE CONTINENTAL SHELF.

SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER, IN OUTLINING THAT PROPOSAL, ACKNOWLEDGED THE WIDELY-HELD THESIS THAT THE WORLD COMMUNITY SHOULD SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF DEEP SEABED MINING.

BUT HE REJECTED AS EXTREME THE PROPOSAL OF MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THAT, ONCE MINED, ALL THOSE RESOURCES BECOME THE PROPERTY OF AN INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITY, TO BE PARCELLED OUT THROUGH SOME ECONOMIC FORMULA, TO THE WORLD'S NATIONS.

THE U.S. POSITION IS TO REACH AN ACCOMODATION, THROUGH THE FORMATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITY WHICH WILL

GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF DEVELOPED NATIONS TO MINE THE DEEP SEABEDS, AND WHICH WOULD ALSO GO INTO THE MINING BUSINESS ITSELF, ON BEHALF OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD. BENEFITS WOULD BE SHARED ON A PARTIAL BASIS, PRIMARILY WITH THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES.

TO ALLAY THE FEARS OF THE WORLD'S PRESENT PRODUCERS OF NICKEL AND COPPER, WHO SUGGEST THAT DEEP SEABED MINING WOULD UPSET WORLD MARKET PRICES, THE UNITED STATES HAS PROPOSED A TEMPORARY LIMIT ON PRODUCING SEABED MINERALS TO EASE THE TRANSITION.

IN SETTING FORTH THE NEW PROPOSAL, THE UNITED STATES HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT TIME IS RUNNING SHORT ON FINDING AN ACCEPTABLE INTERNATIONAL SEA LAW. AS SECRETARY KISSINGER MADE CLEAR ... THE UNITED STATES NOW IS MANY YEARS AHEAD OF ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE TECHNOLOGY OF DEEP SEA MINING. AND, IF THOSE SEABEDS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT, THE UNITED STATES CAN AND WILL PROCEED TO EXPLORE AND MINE ON ITS OWN. BUT THIS IS SOMETHING THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT WISH TO DO. WASHINGTON'S TEMPORARY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE EVENTUALLY WILL BE OVERCOME, AND WITHOUT AN INTERNATIONAL ACCORD TO PEACEFULLY MINE THE SEAS, THE WORLD COULD FIND ITSELF THREATENED BY MILITARY CONFRONTATION OVER THE SEABED'S RICHES.

IT'S REPORTED THAT SOME DELEGATES AT THE U.N. CONFERENCE HAVE TERMED DOCTOR KISSINGER'S NEW PROPOSALS AN ULTIMATUM. BUT ON CLOSER LOOK IT IS AN URGENT APPEAL -- A WARNING RATHER THAN AN ULTIMATUM. THE UNITED STATES CANNOT DELAY

IN ITS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AN ASSURED SUPPLY OF CRITICAL RESOURCES THROUGH DEEP SEABED MINING PROJECTS. IT PREFERS TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION UNDER A STABLE INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT. BUT IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR WASHINGTON TO RESIST PRESSURE TO PROCEED UNILATERALLY.

THAT IS WHY THE UNITED STATES IS OFFERING COMPROMISE -- AND HOPING FOR AN AGREEMENT THIS YEAR ON A REGIME TO PEACEFULLY SHARE THE WEALTH OF THE OCEANS.

JS/PBM